



Florida House of Representatives

Neil Combee State Representative, District 39

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July 3, 2013

The Honorable Gow Fields
City of Lakeland
228 S. Massachusetts Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33801

Dear Mayor Fields,

As a delegation, we've stayed quiet until yesterday because we wanted to wait and give the Lakeland City Commission and government leadership a chance to demonstrate that it understands how grave this ongoing situation is. Instead, Monday's meeting produced nothing but empty talk.

That's why we acted yesterday. Our delegation is united in seeking a lasting solution to this crisis. I fully support the delegation's position and will work to see it come to fruition. I have the utmost respect for Sheriff Judd. I expect his involvement, if he ultimately gets involved, will come with conditions that he feels will allow for significant reform.

But I also personally want to emphasize that I've lost confidence not just in LPD leadership, but in the Lakeland city government leadership as a whole. Hints of these problems have existed for years. LPD lost its accreditation well before any of these recent allegations became public. For whatever reason, depravity and unprofessionalism continued to go unchecked. And Lakeland residents are now paying the price.

After Monday's disappointing city commission meeting, I am concerned about the willingness, desire and the ability of the Police Chief, City Manager, and City Attorney to work with the Sheriff. And I do not see evidence that the city commission is capable of requiring city officials to do what's necessary. I also believe that repairing LPD's professional relationships with State Attorney Jerry Hill's office is vital and a necessary part of any reform program. So, State Attorney Hill has an important role to play as well. At risk of redundancy, State Attorney Jerry Hill, and Sheriff Grady Judd are elected, in part, by Lakeland's voters.

The biggest disappointment for me about Monday's meeting was no one thought it necessary to apologize to Ms. Eberle for what she had to endure as an employee of the City of Lakeland. In my opinion, based on the investigation by the "District Attorney", she and her family are certainly due an apology, and that would have been a fine time and place to deliver it.

This is not just a sex scandal in the LPD. It's a crisis of governance for the entire city of Lakeland. Changes must come and soon.

Sincerely,



Representative Neil Combee
District 39

c: Commissioners:

Justin Troller
Phillip Walker
Keith Merritt
Edie Yates
Don Selvage
R. Howard Wiggs

City Manager:
Douglas B. Thomas

c: Polk County Legislative Delegation:

Sen. Denise Grimsley
Sen. Darren Soto
Sen. Kelli Stargel
Rep. Seth McKeel
Rep. John Wood
Rep. Ben Albritton
Rep. Mike LaRossa
Rep. Neil Combee

Committees:

Economic Development & Tourism Subcommittee – Government Operations Subcommittee –
Regulatory Affairs Committee – State Affairs Committee